

WE CLAIM:

1. A database system comprising:
a communication network;
a plurality of client applications coupled to the
5 network and generating database access requests;
a set comprising one or more intermediary servers
coupled to the network to receive the requests;
a data storage mechanism coupled to the network and
having an interface for communicating with the
10 intermediary servers;

means within the intermediary server responsive to a
received database access request for establishing a
channel with the data storage mechanism to obtain data
from the data storage mechanism in response to a received
15 client request; and

means within the intermediary server for formatting
the obtained data in a manner suitable for use by one of
the client applications that requested the associated
database access.

2. The database system of claim 1 wherein at least
one of the client applications database management system
(DBMS) client and the intermediary servers comprise
listener processes configured to accept requests from the
5 DBMS client.

3. The database system of claim 1 wherein at least
one of the client applications comprises a web browser
application and the database access requests comprise
HTTP requests.

4. The database system of claim 1 wherein the
intermediary server comprises a web server having one or
more interfaces for receiving the database access

requests and communicate with the data storage mechanism
5 interface.

5. The database system of claim 1 wherein the intermediary server is topologically close to the client applications and topologically distant from the data storage mechanism.

6. The database system of claim 1 wherein the intermediary server comprises:

a first computer located topologically close to the client application and configured to receive the database
5 access requests;

a second computer located topologically close to the data storage mechanism and configured to communicate with the interface of the data storage mechanism; and

a communication channel between the first and second
10 computers.

7. The database system of claim 6 wherein the communication channel supports prioritization of database access requests and responses to database access requests.

8. A method for serving database content comprising:

providing a communication network;

generating requests for database content from data
5 storage mechanism using a plurality of client applications coupled to the network;

providing an intermediary server coupled to the network to receive the requests from client applications;

providing a data storage mechanism coupled to the
10 network and having an interface for communicating with the intermediary server;

causing the intermediary server to access the data storage mechanism in response to receiving a request from a client application;

15 using the intermediary server to format database content obtained from the data storage mechanism to a format usable by the client application; and

delivering the formatted database content to the client application that generated the request for
20 database content.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the act of generating requests for database content comprises generating a database management system (DBMS) client query and the act of receiving the request comprises
5 implementing a DBMS listener process in the intermediary server configured to detect the DBMS client query.

10. The method of claim 7 wherein the step of providing an intermediary server comprises:

providing a first computer located topologically close to the client application and configured to receive
5 the database access requests;

providing a second computer located topologically close to the data storage mechanism and configured to communicate with the interface of the data storage mechanism; and

10 maintaining a communication channel between the first and second computers.

11. The method of claim 7 prioritizing at least one request for database content over other requests for database content at least partially based on content-based prioritization criteria specified by the database
5 owner.

12. The method of claim 7 prioritizing at least one request for database content over other requests for database content at least partially based on user priority information, wherein the user priority
5 information is based upon identification of a user associated with the client application generating the at least one request.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the user priority information is specified by the database owner.

14. The method of claim 12 wherein the user priority information is derived from content priority information aggregated from a plurality of database content requests.

15. The method of claim 7 further comprising:
causing the intermediary server to issue a remote procedure call to the data storage mechanism over the established channel to initiate the transport of data.

16. The method of claim 7 further comprising:
causing the data storage mechanism to issue a remote procedure call to the intermediary server over the established channel to initiate the formatting and
5 delivery of the database content using the data obtained from the data storage mechanism.

17. A method of prioritizing access to a database comprising:

receiving a plurality of database access requests;
associating a priority value with each database
5 access request; and
selectively applying the database access requests to a data storage mechanism in an order at least partially

based upon the priority value associated with each database access request.

18. The method of claim 17 further comprising prioritizing at least one request for database content over other requests for database content based on user priority information, wherein the user priority information is based upon identification of a user associated with the client application generating the at least one request.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the user priority information is specified by the database owner.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein the user priority information is derived from content priority information aggregated from a plurality of database content requests.

21. A method for serving database content comprising:

generating requests for database content from data storage mechanism using a plurality of client applications;

providing an intermediary server coupled to receive the requests from client applications;

providing a data storage mechanism coupled to the network and having an interface for communicating with the intermediary server;

causing the intermediary server to determine availability of the data storage mechanism in response to receiving a request from a client application;

using the intermediary server to obtain substitute database content in response to determining that the data storage mechanism is busy/unavailable; and

delivering the substitute content to the client application that generated the request for database content.

22. A method for serving database content comprising:

generating requests for database content from data storage mechanism using a plurality of client applications;

providing a plurality of intermediary servers coupled receive the requests from client applications;

providing a database management system coupled to the network and having an interface for communicating with the intermediary server;

implementing at least some of the database management system in local data storage within the intermediary servers;

causing an intermediary server to respond to at least some received requests using the local data storage rather than by accessing the database management system coupled to the network.

23. The method of claim 22 further comprising:

redirecting a request for database content to a selected one of the intermediary servers, wherein the selected intermediary server is selected based upon its ability to respond to the request using the local data storage within the selected intermediary server.